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MEMORIAL

OF

JOHN OSGOOD STONE, M.D.

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MEMOIR

OF THE LATE

JOHN OSGOOD STONE, M.D.

BY

JOHN C. PETERS, M.D.

READ BEFORE THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE ON THURSDAY EVENING, DEC. 21st, 1876.

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ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF THE ACADEMY:

WE have met together for the performance of a sad duty, the great sorrow of which is somewhat lessened by that just pride which we take in recording the merits of a most worthy colleague.

We have assembled to pay that tribute of respect which we owe, and gladly evince, to the memory of one of our best known and most highly esteemed members, the late Dr. John Osgood Stone.

He was an original and always an active member of this Academy from its inception in 1847, and at one time its Vice-President. He was also one of the earliest and most liberal of its benefactors, and did not forget us in his death; but we have much broader and higher

reasons for our deep respect for his memory, for his whole life, from the earliest days of his studentship down to his sudden taking off, in mature years, was full of honorable and successful effort, and reflects great credit upon all who were associated with him.

My own more intimate acquaintance with him dates back only about ten years, and I have been forced to draw largely upon the recollections and opinions of his older and better friends, Drs. Willard Parker, Isaac E. Taylor, James Crane, J. H. Emerson, the Rev. Drs. Osgood and Bellows, Messrs. Prichard, Jackson S. Schultz, and others, for the materials of the sketch of his life and character which I now lay before you.

He was the son of Robert Stone, of Salem, Massachusetts, was born in February, 1813, and sprang from a good and substantial family of the old conservative Unitarian school. The Rev. Samuel Osgood speaks of him as his long-known and cherished friend, and writes: "I have known him over forty years, or since

he entered the Harvard University, in the class after mine, or in 1829. He was a quiet, kindly, and industrious student, with great good sense and very fair abilities, without any undue or peculiar ambition, and one who abhorred all under-hand dealing."

Mr. William M. Prichard says: "I first knew him at Cambridge, where we were classmates, graduating in 1833.

"Dr. Stone had then a certain bluff sincerity, which he retained through life; but he was always to be depended upon, and had a sympathetic and affectionate disposition. Hence he was popular, or more correctly speaking, much beloved in his class.

"He was not very ambitious of mere college distinction, but always respectable as a scholar, devoting himself to such studies as suited his tastes and purposes, rather than attempting to master the whole prescribed routine of the University."

After graduating from the Academical Department of Harvard College, in 1833, he

entered the Harvard Medical School, and in commencing the study of the profession of his choice he showed new zeal and increased diligence, because his heart was now in his work.

He also commenced his strictly professional studies under the preceptorship of Dr. William J. Walker, of Charlestown, Massachusetts, who was regarded as a famous surgeon in those parts.

While still a student of medicine he had charge for a time of the State's Prison and Alms House at Charlestown, Massachusetts, and performed his first amputation of the leg under peculiarly creditable circumstances. He had fairly won the love and confidence of one of the poor inmates, Charles Haley, by his judicious and kind attentions. When the leg was condemned by Drs. Thompson, Walker, and Valentine, Haley said, "I have no doubt that young Mr. Stone can and will perform the operation as well as any other man, therefore I wish him to be the operator." Haley's confi-

dence was rewarded, and his life was saved. Thus early did Dr. Stone begin to win his way to eminence, by skill, kindness, and justifiable self-reliance.

In 1836 he received his degree of Doctor of Medicine from Harvard, and then labored for a while in association with his preceptor, Dr. Walker, whose professional attainments and surgical skill he always held in the highest esteem; and whose careful attention to important minutiæ, and wise readiness when sudden emergencies arose, always commanded his admiration. Dr. Walker is described by others as a man of great self-reliance and independence; a hearty friend and enemy; but withal somewhat eccentric. Dr. Stone never forgot him, and had many pleasant anecdotes to relate of him.

Dr. Stone next visited Europe, and spent many months in walking the hospitals of London and Paris, where about forty years ago he met Dr. Willard Parker, attended the same cliniques with him, and took private lessons from the same teachers.

On his return from Europe he established himself in practice in this city, and devoted himself with ardor to the studies and duties of his profession. He also identified himself with various medical charities and scientific organizations. Among others, after serving as physician at the New York Dispensary from 1845 to 1847, he was chosen one of its Trustees, and remained in office from 1855 to 1861. In this position he used all his influence with the lay directors to improve the condition of the medical staff, and had cause to look back with satisfaction to the success of his efforts. He always stood up stoutly for his own profession, and zealously guarded those rights which are so necessary for the full and honorable discharge of its functions.

In 1848, he married Miss Catharine C. Jackson, of a family which had obtained great distinction in professional and mercantile careers in Boston.

It is characteristic of Dr. Stone, that among the medical societies in which he then took a most decided interest was the New York Medical Association, a small and modest but very practical society, the meetings of which he attended with great regularity; for he always valued highly the simple and honest narration of matured professional experience.

He became one of the attending surgeons of Bellevue Hospital about twenty-seven years ago, and renewed his acquaintance with Dr. Parker, who was also connected with that institution. Their friendship remained unbroken until Dr. Stone's death, and Dr. Parker says, "it has ever been most valuable to me."

In November, 1849, he published a very important paper, which is still quoted, on Imputations and Compound Fractures, with Statistics, in the New York Journal of Medicine, then edited by Dr. S. S. Purple, President of this Academy. It was called out by the great mortality which followed upon the wounds received in the Astor Place riots. The advantages and disadvantages of primary and secondary amputations both in military and civil practice are there handled in a masterly man-

ner, and conservative surgery is elevated to its true position. Dr. Stone was a very careful operator, and his medical treatment of surgical cases was most painstaking. In the above article he does full justice to his preceptor. Dr. Walker, and shines forth as a surgical philanthropist in no uncertain light. Everything was subordinated to truth and the absolute welfare of the patient. Nothing sensational or meretricious was allowed to influence him for one moment; and everthing hasty or careless was severely condemned. From abundant research he first attempted to build up a natural history of compound injuries and comminuted fractures from the record of cases which had received no skilled attention.

He then compiled an equally truthful history of the results of conservative surgery, aided by the elimination of many of those complications which render compound fractures so dangerous. He strongly advised free exploratory incisions, not only to remove all foreign bodies, loose pieces and splinters of bone, and to make

way for the full discharge of pus, but also large and deep enough to study the injury in all its bearings. Then only, with clear knowledge. did he decide whether an attempt should be made to save the limb, or that amputation was unavoidable. With the support and counsel of the late Dr. Cheesman, he saved the arm of his own brother-in-law, who was accidentally shot, just above the elbow, in the Astor Place riots. It is said that this was the only limb so severely injured which was not amputated at that time, and the only life among those so badly wounded that was saved. Dr. Stone's coolness and self-reliance enabled him to accomplish this responsible and delicate task. But it was especially in the interest of the poor artizan and laborer that Dr. Stone made these careful studies. He appreciated well the ultimate consequences of the injuries and gun-shot wounds of soldiers and poor workingmen. The soldier is always animated by the glory which attends the reception of an honorable wound, and even the loss of a limb:

he has also the certainty of a pension for his support. But the laboring man sees and keenly feels the loss of that employment upon which the comfort of his family depends, and which may consign them all to the alms-house. It was in the service of the latter that he gave all his thought and care. The whole reliable history of practical surgery was ransacked in the cause of conservative surgery, and he helped bravely to sustain the rules that no limb should be hastily sacrificed, and that many compound fractures can be made to unite almost as readily as more simple ones, provided all removable complications are skillfully eliminated. Dr. Stone was fully impressed with the idea that the operative surgeon's art should only commence when the physician's *rôle* had ended. If he had been a more selfishly ambitious and less conscientious man, he might have ranked as a very famous operating surgeon.

In July, 1852, he published his views on the treatment of suppurative inflammation of the joints.

In September, 1854, he gave us the results of his experience in absolutely necessary amputations of the lower extremities.

He published other surgical papers from time to time, and preserved many more in manuscript, which may soon appear in print.

His article on Ruptures of the Heart possesses a peculiar interest, for he was destined to die of something of the same kind long afterwards.

About twenty years ago Dr. Stone felt obliged to retire from his post of surgeon to the Bellevue Hospital.

His increasing private practice rendered him unable to give that large amount of time which his careful attention to surgical cases required. "Commencing practice at first without any special influence or acquaintance, he won his way steadily; as he gained patients his personal qualities made them attached friends. No one ever had occasion to doubt his charity or the kindness of his heart, although his natural con-

scientiousness was backed by the most unyielding principle. Fidelity to every duty was his marked characteristic," and he could no longer attend his hospital service satisfactorily.

About this time he also was appointed physician to one of the large English Life Insurance Companies, which, it is said, was obliged to decline insuring his life, mainly on his own representation of his condition.

Twenty years ago Dr. John T. Metcalfe found that he had mitral valvular disease of the heart, but Dr. Stone's own fears about his condition, or at least about sudden death, had long been allayed.

No one else really knew that the restraining hand of Providence had been placed upon him, and that the germs of that cardiac disease which so tragically terminated his existence had then been sown in that compact, muscular, and well-proportioned frame. His habits were so active, his endurance so great, and his appearance so ruddy and healthy, that ill-health or any dangerous defect in his system seemed

the last plea which could force him to surrender any post of duty or usefulness.

of the Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Medical Men, and after serving it in various capacities for many years he was elected its President, from 1872 to 1874. Almost his last service in its behalf was as one of a committee consisting of Drs. Detmold, Parker, Banks, Taylor, and himself, which framed the plan under which its beneficiary system was reorganized last year, on much more liberal yet financially safer principles than before. He and his own family had always been above all probable chances of want, yet he found time to think of the widows and orphans of his less fortunate medical brethren.

"Well known as Dr. Stone was in the medical profession, it was in the spring of 1866 that his name was most prominently brought before the general public by his appointment as Commissioner of the Metropolitan Board of Health, and subsequently he was elected President.

Here he again came into association with his old friend, Dr. Willard Parker. His other colleagues were the lamented Dr. Dalton, Dr. James Crane, of Brooklyn, and Jackson S. Schultz, Esq. It is justly claimed that the sturdy integrity, shrewd common sense, great executive ability, and directness of purpose of Dr. Stone materially aided his able coadjutors in establishing the new board in the good opinion of the medical profession and of the public. He inspired the greatest confidence in the young medical men who were selected as Health Inspectors, for they quickly found that merit, and not political for meretricious service of any kind, was the only way to secure his friendship and support."*

Dr. Parker says: "His talent and integrity were of great avail. His ability and his acquirements, together with his fidelity to his own convictions of truth and justice, commanded our very highest esteem." The Rev. Dr. Bellows, writes: "His courageous and conscien-

^{*} Dr. Emerson.

tious course, as a member of the Metropolitan Board of Health, did great credit to his intelligence and moral worth. He was never known to shrink from any disagreeable obligation, or to compromise his sense of duty." Mr. Schultz says, "Dr. Stone wrote the first Report of the Metropolitan Board of Health, that is, such portions of it as belonged to the Medical Department. His part is considered by good judges to be very able and concise, and attention is called to it as something well worthy of recollection."

It was at this time that I became more intimately acquainted with Dr. Stone. I had various consultations with him about the management of cholera in 1866 and 1867, and subsequently served with him in a committee from this Academy on quarantine and yellow fever. I visited him several times in regard to subscriptions and donations to medical libraries and charities. He was invariably both courteous and generous, and ever afterwards treated me with marked kindness, which subsequent de-

mands which I made upon his time and charity seemed rather to increase than diminish.

His colleague, Dr. James Crane, of Brooklyn, writes: "My personal acquaintance with Dr. Stone began some ten years since, as Associate Commissioner in the Metropolitan Board of Health. There was something about him which at once secured confidence. His large, well - shaped head, and broad, overhanging brow; his plain and unpretending outward appearance; his somewhat austere and self-reliant manner; his apparent consciousness of his own capacities—all gave assurance of the vigor and breadth of his latent powers, and placed the mark of superiority upon him.

"He was an *honest* man, and his integrity was unflinching and unspotted. Amply liberal and conciliatory in his differences with the opinions of others, he held to his own convictions with unyielding adherence. In our frequent deliberations the question of *mere policy* never seemed to arise in his mind, but right and truth had to be the absolute conditions of all proce-

dures. This was his eminent characteristic. Out of this moving principle came his fidelity to the public trusts committed to him. The consciousness of responsibility was always with him, ever awake, active, and impelling him up to the highest demands of duty. He was no laggard; but with directness, promptness and energy, he met the claims and urgency of all occasions. In all our mutual relations I never knew him to descend to intrigue or cunning artifices, but, with a wise sagacity, proceeding solely upon the basis of the right and true, he sought to devise measures for the public good.

"He was a strong man; strong in moral purpose and in mental power. His highly endowed and cultured faculties, joined to a determined will, well fitted him for the high public position which he then held, and not only held, but completely filled.

"He was a grand, good man, a royal citizen, and a faithful public servant, dignifying the office he held, and amply satisfying the trusts committed to him."

In strictly professional life his most constant associate was Dr. Isaac E. Taylor, who says: "We were intimate friends for fully thirtythree years. I always admired him for his independence and decision of character, frankness of manner, his sterling integrity, high sense of personal honor, his great appreciation of the usefulness and dignity of his profession, and his steady maintenance of all those noble qualities under any and every circumstance. To me he was very attractive, and to his patients I know that he had a heart full of sympathy, although that sometimes seemed hidden, in a degree, by his calmness of manner and by his great strength of mind. I do not think that he sought to make friends with everybody; but his friends were real friends, firm and faithful all. He never seemed to desire to force himself to the highest prominence in his profession, but many honors came to him by the mute force of his character. If he had been more ambitious he would have attained the height of his desires, for his clear intellect

and determined will would have enabled him to accomplish all he sought. He selected no speciality in medicine, and satisfied himself with the general study and practice of his profession, in which he had few equals." His early training under Dr. Walker once led him to some preference for surgery, but the instincts of the pure physician were too strong in him to allow him to become a mere operator.

Dr. Stone went several times with other surgeons from this and other cities to aid the wounded after the great battles in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. How very acceptable his services were to all, both friend and foe, is well known. While in charge of the wounded Confederates at Williamsburg or Yorktown, they became so much attached to him that they begged him to remain permanently. He asked how they would like to have a Massachusetts surgeon? "Not at all," was the reply. "we would not trust any of them." To their great surprise, he said: "I am a Massachusetts surgeon." He might have added, "and one of

your most sincere and determined political opponents, but I have been no more faithful to Massachusetts as a citizen than I have been to you as a surgeon."

As regards his social characteristics, Dr. Emerson says: "He was hearty, cheerful, and companionable; but very fond of reading, devoting much quiet thought to the books he perused, or rather studied. Outside of professional matters he enjoyed history, and particularly works on moral and speculative philosophy."

Dr. Bellows tells us "that he was a delightful companion and friend in social life; full of intelligent, fresh, and vigorous ideas upon things in general; open to new truth; not afraid of the results of any honest and brave inquiries; in sympathy with the progress of politics and theology, without being presumptuous or a despiser of experience. To the public he evinced a profound respect for his calling, and a great loyalty to his profession, with a prompt readiness to take the initiative, and bear the consequences when it was necessary to differ from

his fellows, defend the unpopular side, or to introduce the claims of anything not duly recognized and respected."

Dr. Bellows also calls him "that excellent man and good physician, who had high claims upon the confidence and affection of all who knew him well. He possessed the art, happily not rare in his calling, of making close friends of his patients. Few men were more affectionate in disposition, or took a livelier interest in those committed to their professional care. His cordial smile in the sick-room was a medicine in itself. He was so honest, unaffected. hearty, and frank, that every word he said carried its full weight, without the least discount or any allowance for flattery or accommodation. I have seldom known a man who had a more genuine confidence in the safety and value of truth. This occasionally made him brusque, and sometimes aroused opposition; but none could look into his gentle eyes, or watch his honest lips, without seeing that he meant no harm, and only had the necessity in his truthful nature of saying that which he thought useful and necessary, even if it was not immediately palatable.

"His mind was strong, subtle and acute, and he easily attained and held a position of thorough respectability in his profession. Perhaps he would have risen to a more positive exceptional eminence, if he had not always been somewhat independent in his circumstances, or had possessed a more selfish and exacting ambition. But he was not clamorous for honor, and not exclusively devoted to any *speciality*, which seems the easiest road, in our day, to marked distinction, such as it is.

"He seemed to prefer a wide accomplishment in all that pertained to a sound and skillful general practice, rather than to fame in any single department of medicine. He belonged in the highest grade of the pure physician, and it is to be doubted whether Dr. Stone had many superiors in that class."

Dr. Parker says: "In the profession he was always true and honorable, and as a practitioner

he was surpassed by none in soundness of learning and excellent practical judgment."

Such, Mr. President and Fellows of the Academy, was the character of the colleague whose untimely loss we have been called upon to mourn, and whose swift and almost tragic death produced so great a shock among us.

It was not at all a surprise to me, when the materials for this memoir were placed in my hands, to find that I could appear in the *rôle* which I much prefer, viz.: that of a simple and faithful historian. Nothing has or can come to light over which we are obliged to draw the vail of charity; and there has been found no hint or allusion to any weakness or dishonor about which we are obliged to remain silent.

The story of his life is one unbroken record of honest and intelligent usefulness; of absolute loyalty to every duty; and of great kindness in the sturdy maintenance of his own ideas of justice and truth.

The expression that I like best of all that have come to me, and which the Fellows of this

Academy should be the first to appreciate in its heartiness, and even in its apparent homeliness, is that "he was a grand, good fellow."

He died very suddenly on June 7th, 1876, aged sixty-three years. Dr. Parker, in a letter dated June 10th, says: "He called upon me two weeks ago, and after talking over my own case, he spoke of his plans for the summer, and of his intention to diminish his labors. For him I anticipated many years of usefulness and happiness. We plan, but a Higher Power controls the execution."

Dr. Isaac E. Taylor, who met him very often both socially and professionally, says: "He generally appeared in excellent health, although he had complained of some pain in his back a short time before his death. He supposed that he had lumbago of a rheumatic character, as the usual examination showed no trace of disease of the kidneys. He never complained of shortness of breath, or of a sense of oppression in the region of the heart after exercise. Nor did he allude to any cardiac symptoms or to any

thoracic distress, when we were in consultation in a difficult case of instrumental labor, scarcely more than a week before his sudden dissolution. He was then obliged to use considerable force in traction, but exhibited no signs of fatigue or pain, and much less of faintness or exhaustion."

He went to Newport. R. I., on Friday, June 2d, by boat. On Sunday he took a long walk, and returned to New York on Monday, by the afternoon train. He visited some patients the same evening, and on the next day, Tuesday; all of whom said that he looked and seemed remarkably well.

On Wednesday, June 7th, he prescribed for patients at his office, and then went down town to transact some business. On his way he met several friends, and stopped to talk with them. One of them said, "I never saw you look so well;" and he replied, "I am very well, except some neuralgia in my arm." He continued on to an office in Wall Street, where the last friend who saw him alive found him, at 11.30

A. M., sitting and complaining somewhat of an attack of pain which had seized him on his way down, and which still prevented him from raising his arms without suffering. After some conversation he went up Wall Street to Broadway, and, near Liberty Street, while crossing from the east to the west side, two gentlemen, strangers to him, saw him stagger, and caught him before he fell. He was quite dead when they grasped him. "The finger of God touched him, and he fell asleep."

He had been the associate of many physicians, but none were near to aid him. The Great Physician had taken him. He had many devoted friends, but he died in the arms of strangers, and none in that great throng recognized him. He had been the benefactor of many convicts, hospital and dispensary patients, laborers, soldiers, widows and orphans, and of many obscure, suffering people, both white and black, loyal and disloyal, yet his life was demanded of him in an instant, and strange, but kindly, hands alone saved him from

being trampled under the feet of horses or being crushed by heavy vehicles.

His death was a surprise and shock to all, both relatives and friends, from the nearest and dearest down to those who had the least knowledge of him. It is true that twenty-eight years ago he told his dearest friend that he had some trouble with his heart, and that his life would probably not be a long one. In those times he had a great deal of palpitation, and the action of his heart would be so loud and strong that it could be heard at some little distance. He was then thin and pale, but some years afterwards he became stout, and his face had a rich, high color; he ceased to complain of his heart, and his palpitations left him. He convinced himself and his wife that his heartdisease would be like that of his father, who lived to a very advanced age. He could climb high hills, which he was very fond of doing, and go quickly from the bottom to the top of a house without the least inconvenience or shortness of breath. He often spoke to his friends

about twenty years ago, about his heart, when it troubled him, but he had not alluded to it since, because it gave him no uneasiness, and during that long period he had no sickness which obliged him even to have his pulse felt.

He was always disinclined to raise heavy weights, but about a year ago he lifted a patient in bed, and as he expressed it, "felt something give way." From that time onwards he suffered occasionally from pain in his back, which was never severe enough, however, to interfere with his work or his duties, and he finally decided that "it was merely muscular or rheumatic." Even this pain nearly left him last spring, and on the Sunday before his death he said that it was very slight indeed. His wife is sure he had not felt any anxiety about the condition of his heart for at least twenty years, and that he looked forward to a long life of comfort and usefulness. Still, a brother, who is a physician, examined him slightly about two years ago, and told his sister, but not his immediate family, that he had heart-disease.

Such is a brief history of his honored and useful life; and such the scanty record of his sufferings and death, perhaps from aneurism; probably from heart-disease; possibly from both.

He was an upright, pure, righteous man, doing good and being good. He was a religious man in the deepest and highest sense of that term, although he was no weak believer, nor yet a cramped fanatic. Integrity, morality, and religion were the living springs of his every thought and act, and they were well proportioned one to another. His faith was as great as his works; and his works did honor to his faith. He was a true, loving and forgiving Christian.

You, Mr. President, and Fellows of this Academy, have already placed on record your appreciation of him by appropriate resolutions of sincere regret for his sudden and unexpected decease. His friends and patients say they have lost not only their trusted physician but a dear friend. There could be no more

striking and affecting testimonial of this than was shown in the open and unaffected grief of the large circle which gathered at his funeral. Few have seen, on any similar occasion, so many and such real mourners.

His wife and three daughters survive him.

RESOLUTIONS of the New York Academy of Medicine:

At a stated meeting of the New York Academy of Medicine, held June 15th, 1876, a Committee, consisting of Drs. A. C. Post, Oliver White, and G. M. Smith, presented the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted—

Whereas, it has pleased Almighty God to call away from earth the soul of our late Fellow, Dr. John O. Stone,

Resolved, That we have heard of the death of our late associate with sincere regret.

Resolved, That we cherish his memory as that of a learned and intelligent member of the medical profession, of an honest and upright man, and of a public-spirited citizen.

Resolved, That we sympathize with his family in the great bereavement which they have sustained.

Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the family of the deceased, and to each of the medical journals of this city.

SAMUEL L. PURPLE,

President.

W. T. WHITE, M.D., Secretary.

RESOLUTIONS of the New York Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Medical Men:

At a stated quarterly meeting of the Board of Managers of the New York Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Medical Men, June 21st, 1876, a Committee was appointed, and prepared the following preamble and resolutions—

On coming together so soon after the death of our longtime associate and friend, John O. Stone; and seeing the chair occupied by him at this Board for so many years now vacated forever; we desire to place on record some expressions of the love and respect we entertain for the deceased: therefore be it

Resolved, That with unfeigned sorrow and grief do we lament the death of our fellow-member of this Board, and former President of this Society, as an almost irreparable loss to us and to the Society.

Resolved, That in the death of Dr. Stone the profession

in this city has had removed from its midst an accomplished member of it, who was both a high-toned, courteous gentleman and a most agreeable companion.

Resolved, That we commend to the younger members of the profession in this city, for their emulation, the many virtues of the late Dr. Stone. His love for his profession; his conscientious practice of it; his solicitude for its honor; his fealty to its ethics; his liberality to all its organizations having the well-being and elevation of its members for their object; his integrity in all things; and the honorable position he attained among his fellows and in the community where he had so long resided.

Resolved, That our profound and heartfelt sympathy with his family, in the great calamity that has so suddenly befallen them, be assured to it; and that the Secretary of this Board be directed to transmit to it a copy of these resolutions.

Resolved, That these testimonials of our love and esteem for our late associate in this Board of Managers be entered in the record of its minutes.

O. WHITE,
JAS. O. SMITH,
ISAAC E. TAYLOR.















